The course surveys recent sociological studies of cultural production. It analyzes how cultural materials are used to establish and maintain boundaries that differentiate among class and status groups in the contemporary United States and how diverse fields of cultural production such as popular music, film, and sports shape and influence social processes. We will examine the role of race, class and gender in cultural production and recent theories and debates about the relation of culture and society.

**Required Readings:**

Gans, Herbert: *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*
Moore, Ryan: *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture & Social Crisis*
Wilkins, Amy: *Wannabes, Goths and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style and Status*
Phillips, Kendal: *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*
Jenkins, Henry: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*

Other readings will be available on Blackboard

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance and class participation:** Debate and discussion will be an integral component of the class. All students are required to bring a short one-page response to the weekly assigned readings for Friday’s class session which will be used as a basis for class discussion. Students will be evaluated on your ability to analyze and dissect the issues raised in the course materials. You must turn in a hard copy of your response essay and be present in class to receive full credit. This requirement will make up 10 percent of your final grade.

**Papers:** There are 3 papers due during the semester, each 7-8 pages. The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to expand on the themes raised in the readings. The format and specifics of each paper will be discussed in class. The papers may require a little outside research, but not much. The papers will draw from course readings and discussion. You are encouraged to see me and/or the writing center for assistance on the papers. *Each paper is worth 30% of your final grade.*

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Week 1) The Study of Popular Culture  
Sept 5: Some Basic Concepts

Week 2) High Culture vs. Mass Culture  
Week 3) The Meanings of Music
S. Frith, “Pop Music” in *Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, 2010

Week 4) Culture, Commerce and Conflict

Week 5) Authenticity and Cultural Boundaries
D. Grazian, “The Production of Popular Music as a Confidence Game: The Case of the Chicago Blues” *Qualitative Sociology* 2004, 137-158

Week 6) Interpretive Communities

Week 7) Subcultures and Rituals of Solidarity

Week 8) Television: Programming, Content, and Genre
D. Kellner, “Critical Perspective on Television from the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism” in J. Wasko *A Companion to Television*, 2010

Week 9) Television and Citizenship

Week 10) Cinema and Society
K. Jackson, “The Vampire Next Door” *Sight and Sound*, Nov 2009 ps. 40-45

Week 11) Deviant Consumption

Week 12) Culture and Collective Action
Nov 28: H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, chapters 1-4
Week 13) The Uses of Social Media
Dec 5: H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, chapters 5-6 and conclusion
M. Gladwell “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not be Tweeted” *New Yorker*, Oct 2010

Week 14) Wrap up session: Culture, Technology, and 21st Century Society
Dec 12: Reading TBA

**The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus and add supplementary readings at any time.**

**Honor Code:** This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. For details see: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.